

**The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security**

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
*U.S. Customs and Border Protection
FY 2013 Budget***

**Witnesses:
Chief Fisher (Border Patrol)
Acting Assistant Commissioner McAleenan (Field Operations)
Assistant Commissioner Kostelnik (Air and Marine)
Assistant Commissioner Borkowski (Technology, Innovation, and Acquisition)**

10:00 AM | Wednesday | February 29, 2012 | B-318 RHOB

Let me first start today's hearing with some very sad news --

Yesterday evening, a Coast Guard helicopter carrying four crewmembers unfortunately and tragically crashed off the coast of Mobile, Alabama. While the investigation is still ongoing, initial reporting states at least one of the crewmembers has died.

This tragedy is a sobering reminder of the risks our frontline operators take each and every day -- risks that put many brave, dedicated security professionals in harm's way.

Our most sincere thoughts and prayers are with the families of the crewmembers, the Coast Guard, and the entire DHS family during this difficult time.

This morning we welcome witnesses from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (or, CBP), as we consider the President's FY13 Budget Request to secure our borders and facilitate lawful travel and trade. They are: Chief Michael Fisher, Office of Border Patrol; Assistant Commissioner Kevin McAleenan [MAC-ah-lean-in], Office of Field Operations; Assistant Commissioner Michael Kostelnik [kah-STELL-nick], Office of Air and Marine; and Assistant Commissioner Mark Borkowski [bore-COW-ski], Office of Technology, Innovation, and Acquisition.

Gentlemen, we thank you for being here and look forward to hearing your testimony. We also thank you for your service -- and for representing the interests of your officers and agents who risk their lives every day.

It is in the interest of those officers and agents that I focus today on the shortfalls in the FY13 budget request. For the first time, the budget request proposes a reduction to CBP's top line. While the Administration claims to fully support the 21,370 Border Patrol agents and 21,186 CBP officers, the request contains a number of cuts to mission support activities that could dilute that investment.

Since the creation of DHS, Congress has increased staffing levels to deliver CBP's mission. Those frontline personnel came with the mission support funds that CBP said it needed -- to provide vehicles, weapons, training, communications equipment, and technical support for those assets and to keep agents in the field.

Now we see a request that contradicts those earlier requests by assuming numerous “efficiencies” and deferments.

While this Subcommittee has directed CBP to look for efficiencies in its operations, we expected that the efficiencies would be *real* and based on actual analysis – not dictated by prorated cuts across the board.

Even more troubling than our questions about the impact of cuts to basic mission support activities are our concerns over the blatant reduction in CBP’s air surveillance capabilities.

The request proposes to cut 37 frontline positions from Air and Marine operations and -52% from air and marine procurement.

At a time when the Border Patrol is looking to maximize its available resources and persistent surveillance is one of the biggest remaining gaps, this is unacceptable.

Further, our nation’s counterdrug efforts in the source and transit zone have been decimated in this request – with cuts in the Department of Defense, Coast Guard, and CBP assets.

Bottom line – this budget puts the investments we have made in border security over the years at risk.

I stated last year that we expect truth in budgeting – and, unfortunately, this request does not provide a straightforward picture of its impacts. As a result, Gentlemen, we look forward to hearing from you today regarding what you need to perform your mission. No doubt, we expect you to be responsible and thrifty in managing the resources you have – but as we put your officers and agents in harm’s way, we must ensure that we are providing them the tools and capabilities they need to perform the mission.

I would like to now recognize the Subcommittee’s distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Price, for his opening remarks.

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